

POPE of Major Schemes Summary Report

Scheme Title	A66 Greta Bridge to Stephen Bank Improvement
Opening Date	29 th September 2007
POPE Stage	One Year After Study

Scheme Description

The scheme comprised the construction of dual carriageway between the existing Greta Bridge Bypass and Stephen Bank. Specific elements of the scheme included:

- Construction of a new carriageway next to the existing single carriageway over a distance of 3.1 miles;
- Closure of some minor side roads and accesses;
- Improvements to remaining junctions; and
- Improved facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. Two dedicated crossing points including central corrals for equestrian use.

Objectives (from Technical Appraisal Report and AST)

- Improve poor safety record
- To ease congestion when essential maintenance work is carried out
- Improve journey times and reliability

Objective Achieved?

Too early to assess with confidence
Likely to be achieved
Yes

Key Findings

- The objective of the scheme to improve journey times and reliability has been achieved, but it is too early to assess the impacts on safety, in particular severity rates, with any statistical confidence.
- The number of accidents in the first year after opening has decreased, but not at a statistically significant level. The impact of the scheme on accidents will require a further re-assessment 5 years after opening, when more data is available.
- A number of local safety concerns have been raised by local district and parish councils in relation to a number of junctions and crossings along the scheme. These concerns were addressed by the scheme Stage 3 Road Safety Audit.
- Traffic predictions were reasonably accurate with observed flows one year after opening being between the low and high growth forecasts.
- As expected, there has been little re-assignment of traffic.
- The simplified approach to traffic modelling was appropriate for a scheme of this type.
- Journey time savings are lower than predicted for the peaks, but as predicted for the interpeak. The reasons behind this will be explored further in the 5 year after study.
- Whilst costs were lower than forecast, the outturn BCR is lower than predicted because travel time benefits are slightly lower than predicted. Safety benefits cannot be monetised at the one year after stage.
- Environmental impacts are generally as expected and mitigation measures have been incorporated as planned.
- The scheme has contributed to achievement of objectives in local plans and policies.

Summary of Scheme Impacts

Traffic

- The improved section of the A66 is used by approximately 16,000 vehicles per day (vpd) – this is broadly in line with traffic levels forecast before opening.
- Flows are between 1% and 3% higher than before opening. This is within the range expected through background traffic growth alone. Therefore, no additional traffic has been attracted to the area as a result of the improvements, as expected in the scheme appraisal.
- Flows on the access roads to the A66 have increased by up to 33% which may reflect the closure of some junctions and improvements at others, but the absolute numbers remain low.
- Journey times have improved by up to 40 seconds compared to the before situation, but the improvement is less than predicted in the peaks.

Safety

- The main objective of the scheme was to reduce fatal and serious accidents. Changes in annual fatal and serious accident rates observed at the one year after stage have been insignificant. It will take more time for any measurable and conclusive impacts to become evident.
- The total annual average number of Personal Injury Accidents has decreased from an average around 3 before the scheme opened to just over 2 over since opening, a decrease of 1 accident per year. There have been no serious accidents since scheme opening.
- The forecast safety benefits for this scheme came from a predicted reduction in fatal and serious accidents. However a small increase in total accidents was also predicted (0.2 on average per year), but these were forecast to be less severe and result in only slight injuries.
- The changes in accident numbers observed at one year after opening are not statistically significant and it cannot be inferred that the changes are a direct result of the scheme.
- Consultation with local councils raised a number of safety concerns with various junctions and crossings along the improvement. However, these have been addressed in the Schemes Stage 3 Road Safety Audit.

Environment

- Post opening traffic flow levels were broadly in line with forecasts and therefore as expected the scheme has had a beneficial impact on noise levels and air quality.
- There has been an increase of 8% in tonnes of carbon emissions in the opening year. This can be attributed to the increase in traffic flows and speeds since the scheme opened. This compares to a forecast increase of 6%.
- Landscape planting appears to have been implemented as expected and to be establishing satisfactorily. Subject to successful ongoing establishment the landscape mitigation measures should fulfil their long term objectives.
- Impacts on other environmental objectives are as expected and mitigation measures have been implemented as planned.

Whilst provision for pedestrians, cyclist and equestrians has largely been implemented as expected some comments were received relating to crossing points and use of these by pedestrians and equestrians. In particular, visibility at crossing has been raised as well as issues relating to the design of equestrian crossings. These have been addressed in the Schemes Stage 3 Road Safety Audit.

Accessibility

- Severance has improved for the small number of pedestrians and other non-motorised users due to the improved crossing facilities.
- As expected, the scheme has had no impact on access to the public transport system or option values as there is no significant public transport activity in the area. However, it is likely that the journey time savings will assist reliability of long-distance coaches and bus services.

Integration

- As expected, the scheme had no impact on transport interchange. It was not the intention of the scheme to directly improve public transport services and interchanges and no improvement to facilities have been made as a result of the scheme.
- Whilst the appraisal forecast no impact on land use policy, the scheme objectives are consistent with those set out in a number of local and regional policies including: North East Regional Transport Strategy, County Durham Structure Plan, North Yorkshire County Council LTP and Durham County Council LTP.

Summary of Economic Performance

	Costs in £m 2002 Prices discounted to 2002 at 3.5% ¹	
	Pre-opening forecast	Post-scheme re-forecast
Journey Time Benefit	£35.0m	£24.4m
Safety Benefits	-. ²	-
Total 30 Year Benefits (PVB)	£35.0m	£24.4m
Costs (2002) prices	£9.6m	£9.5m
Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)	3.6	2.6

- Journey time benefits at £24.4m are 30% less than predicted, due to lower journey time savings than predicted.
- Accident benefits cannot be monetised for this scheme at the one year after stage.
- Out-turn costs at £9.5m, are slightly lower than forecast.
- Despite costs being less than forecast, the lower benefits result in the BCR being lower than expected, but still representing good value for money.

This document summarises the findings of the one year after post opening evaluation study completed in October 2009.

¹ Discounted to 2002: the year 2002 has been used as the standard base year

² Accident benefits removed to enable a like for like comparison with the outturn reduces the predicted PVB from £70 million and the BCR from 7.3